Leaven

Volume 11
Issue 4 *Preaching*

Article 2

1-1-2003

Editors' Notes

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D'Esta Love and Stuart Love

Preaching has been important to both the synagogue and the church. From the Hebrew Bible, two activities—prophetic proclamation and the teaching of Torah—convey the notion of preaching. In the New Testament, the terms *kerusso*, "to announce or to proclaim publicly," and *euangelizo*, "to announce good news," are frequently used. Avery Dulles in his book, *Models of the Church*, advances the "kerygma" model as a major way of viewing early Christianity and the history of the church. The early church was largely identified through its public proclamation.

Certainly, preaching has been important to the Stone-Campbell heritage. We believe an issue of *Leaven* devoted to this theme is significant, especially when writers are able to lead us into "the state of the art." David Fleer, our guest editor, has in recent years provided leadership and impetus to the study and renewal of this vital topic through the Rochester College lectures on preaching. David is well qualified for this task, having preached for a number of years and having studied communication at the doctoral level after the completion of his ministerial professional training.

Your editors commend this issue to you—our readers. It will challenge our thinking as we consider "cutting edge" issues facing the church's service to Christ through what and how we proclaim the gospel. What follows is Dr. Fleer's introduction to this issue.

The twenty-first century dawns on a new era in preaching. Disconcerting shifts in culture and church have wreaked havoc on our once-confident Lord's Day pattern, launching us into exhilarating opportunities to think afresh about who we are and the kind of preaching we hear and perform.

We begin this issue with an essay by the editor: we who listen to preaching yearn for sermons that grant God the space to act and create the potential for new awakenings. How shall we assess the status of preaching today? Where are we headed? What should be our compass? A host of congregations from our heritage currently are moving into the evangelical orbit (where teaching sermons meet the needs of a "seeker" audience). Others are taking cues from the mainline Protestant world (where, Tom Long claims, the current crisis is a lack of knowledge and the call to homiletics is for an Augustinian season of *teaching*).

Our unique homiletic history demands that we think afresh about preaching, resisting quick alignments with popular practices and acknowledging our history separate from mainline Protestantism. The opening essay proposes that, in order to move beyond our didactic moorings, we should return to Augustine's "homiletic trinity," a rich texture of teaching and pleasing for the purpose of persuasion that reunites rhetoric to Christianity, reconnecting to a biblical relationship that may help guide us in this new era of preaching.

Three writers have graciously responded to my proposal. **Richard Hughes** affirms my reading of our didactic homiletic tradition and our desperate need to take Augustine seriously. However, he adds that "... we also need to take Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Kierkegaard, Barth, and a host of other Christian thinkers seriously." When we take seriously our own history as well as that of others around us, Hughes says, "... we will then be in a position to enter into a mutually enriching conversation with the world of American evangelicalism. Such a conversation will enrich our pulpits beyond measure."

Bruce Shields shares some of my understandings but pushes my position "back beyond Augustine to the master story tellers of ancient and more recent times—not just to enhance the story telling of preachers, but to find help in developing the drama of worship so that the service, including the sermon will truly 'grant God the space to act, and thus create the potential for new awakenings.'"

Tom Long notes a common distress among all Christian pulpits: the "good news" does not strike all who hear it as news—we need to explore the most basic understanding of preaching through the "first Christian sermon." He uses Augustine's categories to probe how the good news teaches, delights, and prompts action.

The remaining essays encourage us to enter the homiletic conversation at various levels. **Mark Love** and **Stephen Johnson** ask that we better engage the biblical text. By this they refer not to a more efficient exegesis, which still restricts Scripture to a record of past events, but to an approach that keeps the word of God alive with images and language that change the very way we experience life and God. Love and Johnson thus offer a "post critical" approach to reading and preaching Scripture that removes the distance created by the dichotomy of "what it *meant*" and "what it *means*." Love even claims that the popular "analogical bridge" between "then" and "now" has kept the text at arms length from listeners. Love's remedy is found in early Christian and biblical interpreters, where a close connection between listeners and text assume fresh ways to imagine sermons.

Johnson, likewise, opts not to "bridge" the gap between the word and the audience but calls for another angle of reading that leads the preacher to a faithful encounter with a living word for the church. To enhance such a faithful encounter, Johnson suggests that preachers not only discover the world behind the text (the work of historical critical methods) and a sense of the world in front of the text (where we live today) but, most essentially, stand within the world of the text. Johnson sketches a performative biblical theology, describing Scripture's "apocalyptic" function with specific suggestions for reading within this world.

Katie Hays claims that true narrative preaching grows out of good imaginative theology, thoughtful hermeneutics, and an understanding of narrative theory in literature and life. She sets forth four theological/anthropological premises upon which narrative homiletic practice should be based, along with four correspondent principles to which the preacher should commit. Embedded in Hays's essay is a sermon that engages a familiar Pauline text by interweaving the story of Hagar and Ishmael's expulsion from Abraham's home. Her sermon, one which Augustine would judge as "complete" with its pleasing, teaching, and persuasive qualities, demonstrates that good narrative preaching asks hearers to engage theological reflection, a request often unanswered in contemporary preaching.

In the world imagined in Scripture, God's community acts as ministers who bind the wounded, feed the hungry, care for the homeless, and visit the imprisoned. In his reflective essay, **Bob Randolph** argues that Christian responsibility knows no gender limitations and cannot be done effectively until we learn to hear one another and value the gifts we each bring to our congregations. Given the importance of preaching in our tradition, our most defining work will not happen until women do their part of the speaking.

Tim Sensing provides helpful navigation through the growing sea of homiletic resources with an annotated review of the literature. His historical survey begins with the "Craddock Revolution" and works through major contributors over the last quarter century. The article gives special attention to volumes dedicated to preaching from the Old Testament and literary genres, theology of preaching, and voices of the marginalized.

The issue also includes what must be the largest single collection of reviews of current homiletic literature. Sixteen reviewers—inside and outside our heritage, women, men, elders, preachers, and professors—critique recent contributions.* Readers will find these balanced reviews an invaluable tool.

A quarter century ago, a beloved teacher advised his theology students to keep their preaching fresh by reading a new book on the topic each year. Little did we know that a homiletic revolution was just beginning that would transform his mild admonition into an essential task of survival. I am pleased to offer this issue as a contribution and guide to the project and thank each participant for his or her outstanding contribution.

DAVID FLEER

*Five of these reviews are included due to space limitations. The rest of these reviews will appear in subsequent issues.